individuals with communication disabilities, the need to assess the context in which the communication occurs or fails to occur is emphasized as part of the total analysis. Intervention strategies focus on optimizing functional communication in meaningful situations and environments.

The concluding chapter reviews the content of the book as a whole and puts this into context against other approaches.

A major strength of this book lies in its organization and clarity. Despite many contributors it is not disjointed and makes interesting reading from cover to cover. Each chapter also has a summary at the end which aids access to its content. It appears to be well referenced with a comprehensive author and subject index. The final editorial touch is ten pages headed 'notes' but otherwise blank, presumably for the reader's personal comments.

All the contributors are from North America and mostly from various departments of education. For the British reader some of the chapters are not directly relevant to service provision over here, for example the history of mental handicap in the 19th and 20th centuries which relates mostly to what was happening in North America; nevertheless this also makes interesting reading. However, the fundamental focus that communication skills taught and addressed must be valued in adults *per se*, and that this instruction must address functional community based needs, are views that I am sure are shared by many on this side of the Atlantic.

The area of communication is undoubtedly one that presents some of the most difficult problems in mental handicap. This book should be of interest to anyone working with mentally handicapped adults and should be helpful to anyone engaged in the assessment of adults with communication problems and in the preparation of programmes to address these.

E. Bradley
St George's Hospital,
London SW17 0RE.

Community Health Aide/Practitioner Manual, R.D. Burgess with P.G. Walker and C. Jorgensen. Pp. 464, illustrated. Alaska Area Native Health Service, 1345 Rudakof Circle Suite 206, Anchorage, Alaska 99508. \$34 plus \$3.50 postage.

The Community Health Aide Programme was started in Alaska in 1968 to provide health care for the inhabitants of remote Alaskan villages. Health care is delivered by 210 Community Health Aide/Practitioners (CHA/Ps). A community Health Aide is selected from his/her village and sent away on a ten week course to become a Community Health Practitioner (CHP). The CHP receives backup from a doctor who may be many miles away but is contactable by radio or phone.

Clinical guidelines for the CHA/Ps come from this manual. It is well laid out with clear illustrations, highlighted important sections and treatment is consistently 'boxed' for ease of reference. I was astounded at what CHA/Ps are expected to do given that their training is brief. The problems presented have credibility however:

there is an excellent section on how to adjust spectacles though the section on microscopy of vaginal discharge is less thorough.

The manual uses the local jargon frequently: psychotic becomes 'crazy', venereal infection is called 'the clap' and lymphangitis is referred to as 'red streak'. The section on tooth decay has a piece on 'bottle mouth' which is caused by letting children go to bed with a bottle of sugary drink or milk thus rotting their teeth.

I asked our practice nurse to read this manual to see if it would be useful in her daily work. She felt that she would hesitate to do many of the procedures on her own or make some of the diagnoses listed in the manual. Nonetheless she did feel that the careful clear descriptions of the emergency procedures would make her more confident in such situations. She liked the sections on examining patients and found the description of complications of labour particularly good.

This excellent manual is not expensive (\$34.00) and would benefit casualty officers, trainees in general practice, casualty nurses and practice nurses. Medical students who do electives in exotic primary care locations would do well to have this manual with them.

T.C. O'Dowd
Department of Clinical Practice,
University of Nottingham,
Nottingham NG7 2UH.

Mainstream Medicine - Gastroenterology, P.W. Brunt, M.S. Losowsky and A.E. Read. Pp. viii + 381. Heinemann Medical Books, London, 1988. £12.95.

Like others in the Mainstream Medicine series, this commendably cheap paperback on Gastroenterology is aimed primarily at MRCP candidates; it may well, however, also benefit trainee surgeons, senior students and even general physicians wanting a quick brushup in an unfamiliar field. After chapters on diet, symptomatology and investigation, gastrointestinal and pancreatic diseases are described in relation to relevant organs from mouth to peritoneum; the final chapters cover gastrointestinal bleeding, neuro-endocrine topics (usefully including the effects on the gut of endocrine and CNS disorders as well as gut hormones and apudomas), immunology and miscellaneous conditions. Appropriate anatomy and physiology are discussed at the beginning of each chapter and references to key reviews provided at the end. The text is neatly laid out in clearly headed short paragraphs, written in admirably plain English and supported by numerous tabulated lists.

I could identify few shortcomings, all of them minor. It seems illogical that gastrointestinal infections were covered in the same authors' earlier sister volume, *The Liver and Biliary System* (1984), rather than here, and a pity that the excellent section on its medical causes was not preceded, in the chapter on symptoms, by any discussion of abdominal pain (other than indigestion). In relation to investigation, radiology was perhaps over-emphasized at the expense of endoscopy and there was insufficient advice about which of the many available tests should be selected in any particular clinical situation. Furthermore, I regret

the editorial decision, made perhaps in the interests of economy, to eschew photographs and X-rays in favour of sometimes turgid verbal descriptions of endoscopic, radiological and histological appearances. More line diagrams might have helped here, as well as in the explanation of processes such as digestion, absorption and the enterohepatic circulation. Lastly, for a first edition, I noticed remarkably few errors – a low sodium diet contains rather more than 20 nmol Na/day (p. 3), lactulose is not primarily a motility stimulant (p. 43) and angioneurotic oedema is not due to cholinesterase deficiency (p. 364)!

Some people like to learn their medicine from 101b multi-author tomes covering all the subspecialties. For those who prefer more compact, single-subject texts, this excellent book can be thoroughly recommended.

D.S. Rampton
*Newham General and The London Hospitals,
Glen Road,
London E13 8RU.*

Parasitic Infections of Pregnancy and the Newborn, edited by Caroline MacLeod. Pp. viii+308. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1988. £35.

A minimum of 150 million births take place every year. Eighty five per cent of these are in developing countries where standards of environmental hygiene tend to be less than ideal and parasitic infections are commonplace. Therefore an enormous number of women of childbearing age are obviously being exposed to such parasitic infections and it is clear that the special risks to them and their infants are insufficiently well understood. This is especially noticeable in relation to preconceptual and interconceptual care and the appropriate use of drug therapies.

To remedy this dearth of both reference and practical resource information, Dr Caroline MacLeod has herself either written or co-authored ten of the fifteen chapters, in addition to being the inspirer and overall editor. The book is thus the outcome of her interests over a number of years in tropical medicine and maternal and child health. It displays her genuine concern for better understanding of the significant parasites involved, better educational and preventive programmes, and better management and treatment based on further research and allocation of resources. Her other contributors are all eminent and experienced. The book is clear, concise and consistently presented – with a strong clinical emphasis on maternal, fetal and neonatal effects of the parasite in each instance and how these should be treated. There is an excellent first chapter about recognizing parasitic infections in pregnancy, a useful penultimate one about the pregnant traveller; and a taut conclusion about prevention which stresses the value of an intersectoral approach for success with all maternal and child health programmes at community level.

The AIDS picture is given in all its complexity as background to the important role played by parasites as opportunistic infections in women and children with HIV infection. But even without AIDS, pregnancy is a time of increased risk to mother and new-born from parasitic infections and this book should interest obstetricians,

gynaecologists and paediatricians, as well as specialists in infectious disease; it also supplements general textbooks of tropical medicine and parasitology extremely usefully and is particularly recommended for people planning to work overseas, including medical students on electives in MCH. Final note: it will please her many admirers to see that Dr MacLeod has so appropriately dedicated this excellent book to Dr Cicely Williams.

Katherine Elliot
*24 St George's Court,
Gloucester Road,
London SW7 4QZ.*

Pathophysiology of Heart Disease, edited by N.S. Dhalla, P.K. Singal and R.E. Beamish. Pp. xiv+376, illustrated. Martinus Nijhoff Publishing, Boston, Dordrecht, Lancaster, 1987. £56.50.

This book contains a number of scientific papers concerning selected aspects of heart disease presented at a meeting devoted to fundamental cardiac research. For the clinician, the value of such publications is in allowing one a glimpse of present fundamental research and possible future developments in our understanding of heart disease and its treatment. At the very least, to read such a book will enable one to understand better the jargon and the scientific thought behind future research and advances in therapy, and at least one word which was new to me, 'Luistropic' may well become a buzz word over the next few years. The word refers to those substances which enhance the relaxation of cardiac muscle just as inotropic drugs enhance its contraction.

The book commences with an excellent review by Arnold Katz of some clinically important aspects of cardiac physiology, many of which are dealt with in greater detail later in the book. This introduction could be read with advantage by all cardiologists, but inevitably many of the later papers are more specialized and therefore of less immediate interest, as well as being less easily understandable.

This is a book for cardiac departments to have in their library, rather than for individual cardiologists to buy. Cardiologists in training and those of their seniors who retain some intellectual curiosity should be encouraged to read it.

R.E. Nagle
*Queen Elizabeth Hospital,
Birmingham B15 2TH.*

Practical Problems in Medicine – Childhood Asthma, edited by Anthony D. Milner. Pp. vii+148, illustrated. Martin Dunitz, London, 1987. £29.95.

This small book gives a first class account of essential knowledge for all dealing with childhood asthma. The author has presented a distillation of fact, hypothesis, and guidelines for management in a form which is a pleasure to read. The ground covered includes underlying mechanisms of wheeze, the relationship between genetic predis-